



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE FOR 12:01 A.M. TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2002

Contacts: Jane Glickman/Stephanie Babyak
(202) 401-1576
June 11, 2002

**PAIGE RELEASES REPORT TO CONGRESS THAT CALLS FOR OVERHAUL
OF STATE TEACHER CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS**

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige today issued a call to action to states to radically transform their teacher certification systems by raising standards and lowering barriers that keep many highly qualified candidates from pursuing teaching careers.

Paige issued the call to action during remarks at the first annual Teacher Quality Evaluation Conference held in Washington, D.C. The charge to states was based on a key finding in the first annual report to Congress released today on teacher quality nationwide, *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*. The report's data show that state certification systems allow into the classroom too many teachers who lack solid content knowledge of the subjects they will teach. The *No Child Left Behind Act* calls for highly qualified teachers—teachers demonstrating subject knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics and other basic subject areas—to be in place in every classroom by the end of the 2005-06 school year.

“We now have concrete evidence that smart teachers with solid content knowledge have the greatest effect on student achievement,” Paige said. “If we are to meet the challenge of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the 2005-06 school year, states and universities must take heed and act now to bring more of these people into our nation’s

classrooms. There is much to be done, but we know what it is and have no time to waste if no child is to be left behind.”

To raise academic standards, the report calls on states to require prospective teachers to pass rigorous exams in the subjects they plan to teach. Research shows that teachers with strong academic backgrounds in specific content areas are more likely to boost the academic performance of their students in those subjects.

To lower barriers, the report calls on states and institutions of higher education to revamp their teacher preparation programs and eliminate many of their rigid certification requirements, such as the massive number of methods courses. While teachers certainly need to understand how to teach—and to have other basic skills such as classroom management—there is no evidence that lengthy preparation programs achieve these goals any better than streamlined programs that quickly get talented teachers into the classroom. Requiring excessive numbers of pedagogy or education theory courses acts as an unnecessary barrier for those wishing to pursue a teaching career.

The report examines the initial success of several alternate routes to teaching that are less burdensome than traditional preparation programs. These programs recruit successful recent college graduates or mid-career professionals who are interested in teaching and who also possess strong backgrounds in their subject areas. They are streamlined quickly into high-need schools, and are provided training, mentoring and support once they are on the job. These programs, such as Troops to Teachers and Teach for America, hold promise for identifying and supporting candidates who will serve as outstanding new teachers.

Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge is the first annual report to Congress on the state of teacher quality nationwide, as required by Title II of the Higher Education Act of

1998. It was based on responses from state reports on teacher quality submitted to the Department for the first time in October 2001, and includes comprehensive data, by state, on:

- State certification and license requirements for completers of traditional and alternate teacher preparation of teacher programs;
- Statewide pass rates on state assessments of 1999-2000 graduates preparation programs and quartile rankings of their institutions of higher education based on their pass rates;
- Numbers of teachers on waivers or emergency/temporary permits (allowed to teach without having an initial full certificate or license);
- Information on teacher standards and their alignment with student standards; and
- State criteria for identifying low-performing schools of education.

Highlights of the findings include:

- Only 23 states to date have implemented teacher standards tied to their respective academic content standards for grades K-12.
- Academic standards for teachers are generally low. On one teacher licensure test used by 29 states, only one state set its passing score near the national average in reading, while 15 set their respective passing scores below the 25th percentile. On math and writing tests, only one state set its passing score above the national average. Not surprisingly, more than 90 percent of teachers pass their tests.
- Nationwide, six percent of teachers lack full certification and are teaching on waivers and emergency licenses, but the share of uncertified teachers is higher in high-poverty schools and in certain fields, like math, science and special education. (This practice is to be phased out under the new *No Child Left Behind Act*.)

“We know the importance of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom in America,” Paige said. “This report spells out what needs to be done and is a useful tool for policymakers at the state and local levels, institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs, and students and citizens interested in becoming teachers.”

Last Friday, the Department issued guidance for states and others to meet the teacher quality requirements of Title II, Part A of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which aim to increase the academic achievement of all students by enhancing the quality of the nation's teachers and principals. For fiscal year 2003, the Administration is proposing to spend \$2.85 billion on Title II, Part A, also called Teacher Quality State grants. This program consolidates funding from the previous Eisenhower Professional Development and Class Size Reduction programs, and is an increase of \$787 million, or 25 percent, from the fiscal year 2001 appropriation for these two programs.

The report to Congress, including individual state reports and accompanying information, is available at www.nochildleftbehind.gov or directly at www.title2.org.

#